

MTA 2001
5 January 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, FBIS

THROUGH : Chief, Operations Group

SUBJECT : Monthly Report -- Tel Aviv Bureau -- December 1981

I. GENERAL

The bureau ended the year with a month in which U.S.-Israel relations reached a nadir because of disagreements over the application of Israeli law in the Golan Heights and the status of the memorandum of strategic cooperation. The conflict was described by many observers as the worst dispute between the two countries since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948.

Possible indications of Israeli sentiments occurred on the 20th when at 2140 local time bureau staffers were ordered by the marine guard to evacuate the building due to a bomb threat. The bureau resumed operations at 2227 after Israeli bomb squad personnel and marine guards searched the embassy and airline offices across the street and found no suspicious objects. The embassy was also evacuated due to a bomb threat on 2 January.

On Christmas eve bureau staffers again witnessed unusual activity when about 100 youths demonstrated across the street from the embassy with placards denouncing the United States for not being firm in its support for Israel and decrying Soviet support for Syria.

II. OPERATIONS

A. Editorial/Monitorial

The month began with a flurry of processing activity. On the 2d, 28,000 words were filed, mostly related to a Knesset debate on a motion of nonconfidence in the Begin government over the signing of the memorandum of strategic cooperation with the United States. Jerusalem and IDF radios broadcast intermittent live coverage of the debate beginning at 1700 local time and continuing until 0100 the next morning. The motion was defeated 57 to 53.

On 14 December the Israeli stations carried live coverage of a Knesset session called to debate a government proposal to extend Israeli law to the occupied Golan Heights territories. An embassy political officer stood by throughout the evening and received translations of speeches, reports and FYI's as they were processed. The next day, Political Counselor Paul Hare thanked the bureau for its "invaluable support" in providing prompt reports on the events.

The U.S. announced that it was "suspending" the memorandum of strategic cooperation with Israel as a punitive measure against the extension of Israeli law to the Golan Heights. On the 20th the Israeli cabinet decided to "cancel" the strategic cooperation agreement following the now famous early morning meeting between Prime Minister Begin and U.S. Ambassador Samuel Lewis in which Begin berated the U.S. for attempting to punish Israel.

In an effort to resolve the conflict in U.S.-Israeli relations, Senator Charles Percy, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, arrived in Israel on the 27th. Before departing on the 30th for visits to Arab countries, Percy held meetings with Begin and other Israeli leaders.

On 30 December the Turkish section monitored a New Year message from Turkish head of state Kenan Evren who said that elections will be held in Turkey in the "fall of 1983" at the earliest or in the "spring of 1984" at the latest.

B. Lateral Servicing

On 4 December Deputy Chief of Mission William Brown requested that the bureau refile a four-take HA'ARETZ "letter from Prime Minister Begin" discussing the state of his health to the American Embassy Jidda and to the United States Liaison Office in Riyadh. The item was intended for U.S. special envoy Philip Habib who was visiting Saudi Arabia at that time.

In response to a request from a local consumer the bureau on 18 December began receiving drop copies from London bureau of priority and above items from Polish radio and press agency sources. The items are being passed to the consumer on a daily basis.

On the 19th Ambassador Samuel Lewis requested that the bureau process a 3,000-word commentary from the MA'ARIV newspaper which supposedly gave "full details" on how the Israeli Cabinet reached the decision to apply Israeli law in the Golan. The translation was hand carried by the embassy duty officer to the ambassador's residence. The ambassador wanted to read the item before a meeting the next day with Prime Minister Begin.

III. COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

A. On 23 December, Young Hee Lanzillotti, a member of a choir composed of Korean-speaking persons living in Israel, traveled to Jerusalem to participate in a performance at the Montefiore Windmill near the Old City. The performance of Christmas carols was videotaped by a Korean television crew and later transmitted by satellite to Korea for inclusion in a broadcast about Christmas in Israel.



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Attachments: A. Production Report
B. Communications Report